

Drug warnings required

A Food and Drug Administration (FDA) rule requiring that women taking estrogen be given written brochures describing the risks and benefits of the female hormone took effect Oct. 18. Some 5 million US women take estrogen during and after menopause. FDA says the warnings are needed because of widespread estrogen use and studies linking the use of estrogen-containing drugs to cancer of the uterus and to birth defects. Drug manufacturers are required to print the brochures and supply them to pharmacists and other dispensers of estrogen drugs.

For further information on the warning brochures, see CONSUMER REGISTER Oct. 15, 1976.

Corrections

MILEAGE GUIDES

CONSUMER NEWS: Oct. 1 listed Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) fuel economy data for 1978 cars and trucks. We should have mentioned that these figures applied to all states except California, which has a separate edition of the mileage Guide. (Cars sold in California must meet more stringent emission standards than cars sold in the other states.) We apologize for any inconvenience to our California readers. The California Guide may be ordered from Consumer Information Center, Pueblo, CO 81009.

INSULATION

CONSUMER NEWS: Oct. 15 contained a chart of maximum "R" values per square inch for several insulation materials. We should have stated that the values are for each inch in thickness of the given materials. We regret any confusion this may have caused.

S-p-r-e-a-d-i-n-g the word

The American University and Virginia Knauer and Associates, Inc., consultants, are cosponsoring a National Symposium on Chronic Hazards at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Washington, DC on Nov. 29 and 30. Administrators from Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Food and Drug Administration (FDA), Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) will address the Symposium. Among topics covered will be legislation and regulation of toxic chemical substances and the impacts on consumers, business and the environment. Fee is \$295 in advance and \$325 at the Symposium. To register, or for more information, call or write Martin Petersen, Suite 502, 2033 M St., NW, Washington, DC 20036; telephone 202-293-3370.

consumer news

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
Office of Consumer Affairs

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New Consumer Office Proposal

Provisions of the proposed Consumer Protection Agency (CPA) bill [see CONSUMER NEWS, April 15 and May 15] have been modified in a compromise effort to gain support for the establishment of a non-regulatory Federal office to give consumers a voice in Federal rulemaking proceedings and in court actions affecting them.

The new proposal, which has been introduced as a bill in Congress, would create an Office of Consumer Representation (OCR). The OCR bill was proposed by the sponsors of the CPA bill in response to opposition to CPA.

While OCR would be created through a formal consolidation of existing Federal consumer offices at an estimated first year savings of some \$5 million over current costs for these offices, as in the reorganization plan accompanying the original proposal [see CONSUMER NEWS Aug. 15], OCR would not have the power to demand information from business and would have no more rights and powers in court and regulatory proceedings than business entities now enjoy.

Also in response to concerns from opponents, the new proposal specifically prohibits the establishment of regional offices or product testing laboratories by OCR. In addition, the new office would aid small businesses through its authority to represent the interests of small business as consumers of regulated goods and services.

The purpose of the proposed legislation is to insure consumer participation in Federal decisionmaking where there otherwise would be none. A statement by Esther Peterson, Special Assistant to the President for Consumer Affairs, characterized OCR as an office that "will make sure the consumers' side of the argument is heard along with the arguments of business, industry and other groups. It doesn't mean that OCR will always win—it merely means that the consumer view will be heard."

At CONSUMER NEWS press time the House Rules Committee cleared the compromise consumer representation bill by a 10-5 vote. The bill—H.R. 9718, the "Consumer Representation and Reorganization Act of 1977"—is expected to come before the full House of Representatives for a vote during the week of October 31.

Postal Service adds class to mail delivery

Postal Service (PS) has announced the adoption of "Express Mail" as an official class for guaranteed same day or overnight delivery of mail. Express mail service, the first major new class of mail since airmail was introduced in 1918, began formal operation Oct. 9.

Express Mail began as an experimental overnight delivery service in 1970 between Washington, DC and New York City, and is now offered in most major metropolitan areas in the country. Its delivery record during the years of testing shows that more than 95% of all shipments were delivered on time with over 99% delivered within 24 hours.

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Recalls

• **CARS**-General Motors Corp. (GM), Cadillac Division, is recalling approximately 133,000 1975, 1976, 1977 and early 1978 Seattles, Devilles and Eldorados with electronic fuel injection systems because the hoses may leak and could cause a fire. Dealers will check the cars and replace hoses if needed at no charge to owners.

• **National Highway and Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA)** announced that the Ford Motor Co. is recalling about 41,000 1978-model Ford Fairmont and Mercury Zephyr cars for correction of a transmission shift linkage problem that could allow the car to roll free when the gear selector is placed in the "Park" position.

NHTSA said most of the cars should still be in the hands of dealers. However, some of these cars may be sold without the necessary corrections being made and consumers who purchase these cars should ask dealers whether their cars were subject to the recall and whether recall corrections were made.

• **TRUCKS**-General Motors Corp. (GM) announces the recall of about 330,000 Chevrolet and GMC 1976 and 1977 light trucks because their accelerator pedals could stick in the floorboards or carpeting, thus preventing the trucks from slowing down properly when the throttles are released. GM will install newly designed pedals on the trucks at no charge to owners.

• **National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA)** announces the recall of about 48,000 Mack trucks for replacement of engine cooling fans. The recall involves 1973-1977 models with the following specific model designations: CF, DM, DMM, F, HMM, R, RD, RM, U, FL, FS, RL, RS, WL, and WS. The trucks, manufactured between November 1972 and May 2, 1977, are equipped with Mack 6-cylinder engines, air conditioning, and flex fans.

The flex fan poses a potential hazard because the constant flexing may cause the blades to crack and break off, damaging other engine parts or injuring someone repairing a truck when a break occurs.

• **DIETARY SUPPLEMENT-Food and Drug Administration (FDA)** has extended the recall on Liquid Pre-Digested Protein, 15 grams per 30 ml. in pint and quart white plastic bottles to include lot numbers 12393, 12403 (See CONSUMER NEWS Oct. 1, page 2). The oral dietary food supplement, manufactured by Peer Park Corp., Hackensack, NJ, was distributed nationwide. Reason for recall: Bacterial contamination.

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Reading prescriptions

Ever since the **Supreme Court** ruled on a suit that challenged the authority of the Virginia State Board of Pharmacies to ban commercial advertising of prescription drugs, drug stores all over the country apparently may advertise their drug prices, if they choose.

Surveys of a number of communities have shown that prices charged for the same drug product can vary substantially from one pharmacy to another, depending in some cases on the services provided. Knowing how to read a prescription and "shopping around" can help consumers save money on prescription drugs.

There is no mystery about a modern-day prescription once you learn to read it. Written on a preprinted form of standard size, it will contain the doctor's name and address, your name, the date, the name of the drug being prescribed, the dosage form, strength of the dose, amount to be dispensed, directions for use, and the number of times the prescription can be refilled, if at all. The doctor's signature appears at the bottom of the form.

Since virtually all drugs come ready-made from pharmaceutical manufacturers, a doctor does not need to list an assortment of ingredients. Instead, he or she writes the name of the drug being prescribed, using either the

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JOHN H. JONES, M.D.	
1501 Wisconsin Blvd. Atlanta, Ga. 30340	Phone: 403-2222
BNDD No. AH 8741906 Office hours by appointment.	
Name <i>Ms. Lucia Edwards</i>	Date <i>11-16-76</i>
Address <i>1911 Belfield Road</i>	
Rx	
<i>Tetracycline mgms. 250</i>	
<i>Capsules No. 16</i>	
<i>Sig: one capsule q 6 h</i>	
REP. 0 1-2-3 PRN	<i>John H. Jones</i> M.D.

This sample prescription calls for 16 capsules of tetracycline in a dosage strength of 250 milligrams per capsule. The abbreviation "Sig." written under the prescription itself tells the pharmacist the instructions for the patient that should appear on the container label. In this instance, the patient is instructed to take one capsule every 6 hours. The printed letters "REP." followed by a series of numbers in the lower left-hand corner of the prescription indicates the number of times it can be refilled without obtaining a new prescription from the doctor. This prescription could not be refilled. Sample prescription is published courtesy of FDA Consumer (Dec. 1976-Jan. 1977 issue).

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manufacturer's trade name or the generic or common name. The dosage form, if there is a choice, will be indicated by an abbreviation such as "cap" for capsule or "tab" for tablet. Liquids usually are denoted as "el," "sy," or "sol" for elixir, syrup, or solution. Dosage strength is now commonly given in metric measures such as "50 mg," meaning 50 milligrams.

If the drug is to be taken 3 times a day for 7 days, the doctor will write "#21" or "21." Refill information probably will be indicated in an abbreviated form, such as "Refill 2 x," meaning the patient can obtain the same amount of the drug 2 more times without obtaining a new prescription.

The only place on the prescription where Latin still appears is in the directions for use. This is done only as a matter of convenience—a kind of medical shorthand—not as a way of hiding information from the patient, since the doctor usually explains when the drug is to be taken at the time he or she writes the prescription, and the pharmacist translates the Latin abbreviations into English on the label put on the drug container.

One symbol from the past that probably will never change is the "Rx" which has come to mean "prescription." The origins of this symbol are given variously as an abbreviation of the Latin word "recipe," meaning "take thou" or "you take," or as a representation of the sign of Jupiter.

Some Common Prescription Symbols

LATIN	ABBREVIATION	MEANING
ad libitum	ad lib.	freely, as needed
ante cibos	a.c.	before meals
bis in die	b.i.d.	twice a day
capsula	caps.	capsule
gutta	gtt.	drop
hora somni	h.s.	at bedtime
per os	P.O.	orally
pro re nata	PRN	as needed
quaque 4 hora	q.4h.	every 4 hours
quater in die	q.i.d.	4 times a day
repetatur	REP.	refill
ter in die	t.i.d.	3 times a day
ut dictum	Ut dict., UD	as directed

New postal service (Continued from page 1)

Basic features of Express Mail include mailing items up to 70 lbs., with merchandise insurance up to \$500 and document reconstruction insurance up to \$50,000 at no additional charge. Domestic shipments are guaranteed. If a customer's shipment is not available for pickup or isn't delivered at the stated time, postage can be refunded unless the delay was caused by a strike or work stoppage.

Four types of Express Mail Service are offered: next day post office to post office or post office to addressee service; same day airport to airport service; customer designed service to and from any combination of the customer's premises, designated post offices or airport mail facilities; and international service to a limited number of countries.

Rates vary—next day service for an item weighing up to one pound mailed at a post office in New York and delivered to a post office in Los Angeles is \$5.90.

For further rate information and details on the availability of Express Mail to your community, check with your local postmaster or postal customer service representative.

Recalls (Continued from page 2)

• **IODINE—Food and Drug Administration (FDA)** announces the recall of Mann Solution Talbot's Iodine Modified in 113 gram (4 oz.), 227 gram (8 oz.), and 3.785 liters (1 gallon) bottles. Code #676050 IT stamped on the bottle label.

The product, manufactured by Mann Chemical Corp., Louisville, KY, was distributed nationwide. Reason for recall: Product is too strong.

Shellfish supply threatened

The supply of oysters, clams and mussels available to consumers is in jeopardy, because waters that grow shellfish are inadequately protected from pollution and because of a tangle of Federal, state and local regulations which threaten the shellfish industry, a recent Commerce Dept. report concludes.

The report notes that shellfish-growing waters continue to be closed at a rate of 0.6% each year because of pollution from insufficient domestic waste treatment and urban runoff.

To improve supply, the report recommends funding for: programs that will protect shellfish waters including funds for Federal and state wildlife agencies to study the effects of waste discharges; more widespread habitat rehabilitation; and increased use of aquaculture.

And, joint government/industry revitalization programs are needed to address problems of overregulation, the report says.

The report also says cooperative Federal/state research is needed to validate standards currently used to define "safe" harvesting areas. Present testing methods may be restricting the use of resources that are, in fact, safe.

Help for hearing impaired consumers

The Organization for Use of the Telephone, Inc. (OUT) is a private non-profit organization of consumers of hearing aids, their friends, families and community supporters. OUT is dedicated to helping hearing impaired people achieve their needs, especially as these needs relate to the telephone.

For information on "compatible" and "incompatible" phones (do hearing aids and phones work together?) and what OUT is doing to solve the problem, write or call Organization for Use of the Telephone, Inc., P.O. Box 175, Owings Mills, MD 21117; telephone 301-655-1827.

Keeping fire in its place

If you have a fireplace you're planning to use this winter, here are a few considerations and suggestions to help make sure your fire is safe—and enjoyable. First of all, keep in mind that a fireplace is not an efficient way to heat a house—it's a cozy way. After deciding to use your fireplace, plan those winter fires even before you buy wood.

- **Selection of wood**—In shopping and comparing prices, be sure you know if the price is for a cord or a fraction of a cord. (A cord is 128 cubic feet of wood. This equals a pile of wood 4 feet wide by 4 feet high by 8 feet long. Beware of sales of "stacks" of wood—a "stack" being a poorly defined fraction of a cord. Check your local government's office of weights and measures for regulations on cords and cord fractions.) Also note the qualities of different woods when comparing prices. The lowest price may be for the kind of wood that provides poor heat.

- **Inspection of fireplace and chimney**—Check for loose or fallen bricks, cracked or broken flue lining and excessive flue soot and tar accumulation. A fireplace or chimney in poor condition can either be the cause of a smoke problem (smoke leaking into the house) or be a fire hazard (accumulated soot and tar can catch fire).

- **Instruction on using a fireplace**—An open fire is a hazard, but you can reduce the hazard by having the proper equipment for the fireplace, including a fire screen. Also, learn how to start a fire by getting advice from someone with experience. Be sure damper is open. Do not pour kerosene or any lighting fluid on wood, coal or charcoal to start or replenish a fire. Remember—and remind your family—not to get too close to the fire while wearing loose clothing such as a flowing robe. A spark or even a flame could hit a full, loose sleeve, for example, while you are poking a fire. Close damper when fireplace is not being used.

Characteristics of wood for fireplace use (prepared by Maine Bureau of Forestry):

TYPE	EASE OF STARTING	COALING QUALITIES	SPARKS	FRAGRANCE	HEATING QUALITIES
Apple	Poor	Excellent	Few	Excellent	Good
Ash	Fair	Good	Few	Slight	Good
Beech	Poor	Good	Few	Slight	Excellent
Birch (white)	Good	Good	Moderate	Slight	Good
Cherry	Poor	Excellent	Few	Excellent	Good
Cedar	Excellent	Poor	Many	Good	Fair
Elm	Fair	Good	Very few	Fair	Good
Hemlock	Good	Low	Many	Good	Fair
Hickory	Fair	Excellent	Moderate	Slight	Excellent
Locust (black)	Poor	Excellent	Very few	Slight	Excellent
Maple (sugar)	Poor	Excellent	Few	Good	Excellent
Oak (red)	Poor	Excellent	Few	Fair	Excellent
Pine (white)	Excellent	Poor	Moderate	Good	Fair

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